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Ronald S. Berman

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20506

By Messenger

July 19, 1976

THE CHAIRMAN

Honorable Harrison A. Williams, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Labor and Public Welfare
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It has come to my attention that you plan to have a hearing on my nomination but that there remains some question as to when it will occur due to the Senate-House conference on the Arts and Humanities authorizing legislation which has been set for July 29. I understand that Senator Pell feels that the conference should resolve the differences between the bills and that the respective bodies should adopt conference reports prior to the Committee taking up my nomination. I have also been told that the reason advanced for this delay is that it would be detrimental to the legislation if any bitterness over the nomination were to affect the deliberations of the conference.

If this is in fact the reasoning on the matter, I respectfully suggest that it is somewhat far afield. There is absolutely no bitterness on my part toward Senator Pell and my personal relations with him have always been most cordial. He says he opposes my confirmation because he now feels that I have not done an "exceptional" job but only a "satisfactory" one during my first four years as Chairman. This is merely a difference of opinion and certainly not the occasion for any bitterness. I want the opportunity to tell the Committee just how good a job has been done here at the Endowment and to support that claim with hard evidence. I would then answer any questions put by individual Senators in a thoughtful and forthcoming fashion. While I certainly regret Senator Pell's opposition, I have the most friendly feelings toward him for everything he has done for the Endowment in the past and for the support he had always given me until the very unfortunate argument I had last September with the late Stephen Wexler, counsel to the Subcommittee and a close personal friend of mine over the years. Before Steve and I had a chance to settle our differences, he was killed in a tragic accident.

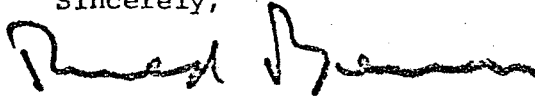
Because of the wide disparity between the Senate and House bills, the conference may well go on for some time. The longer action on my nomination is delayed, the greater the possibility that Congress will adjourn before it has acted and that the nomination will expire. This would make it necessary for whoever is President in 1977 to either nominate me again or choose some other person, and in the meantime the Endowment would be under a "lame duck" type of cloud that would undermine its effectiveness considerably. This would be a great concern to many people throughout the country.

In the eleven year history of this agency, we have never been "political" in the partisan sense. Both Democratic and Republican Presidents have named persons of both parties to the National Council and the staff has been selected with complete disregard as to political persuasion. We have enjoyed strong bi-partisan support from the Congress and the White House throughout our existence. I am totally committed to the continuation of this tradition as I feel sure you are.

In order to avoid additional problems concerning further delay which is, quite frankly, having an adverse effect on the agency, I would like to suggest that a hearing be held prior to July 23 and that a vote be taken thereafter in order to resolve the issue once and for all. Then, the conference could in fact go forward without any possible involvement in the question of whether I am confirmed or not. This would probably not involve more than a few hours of the Committee's time and would bring a great sense of relief to all parties concerned. Would you kindly consider this recommendation which would provide a prompt and reasonable solution to the present difficulty? I earnestly hope you will react favorably, and I shall be in touch in a day or two since I would need at least a little time to prepare an appropriate statement for the record.

During our meeting sometime back and in other ways, you have been very kind and understanding of my situation. You can appreciate that this has not been easy for me or my family. I wish indeed it would all go away, but I have an ethical responsibility to see it through. Please know how grateful I am, and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,



Ronald S. Berman
Chairman